

amnesty International

AFGHANISTAN



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Torture of political prisoners



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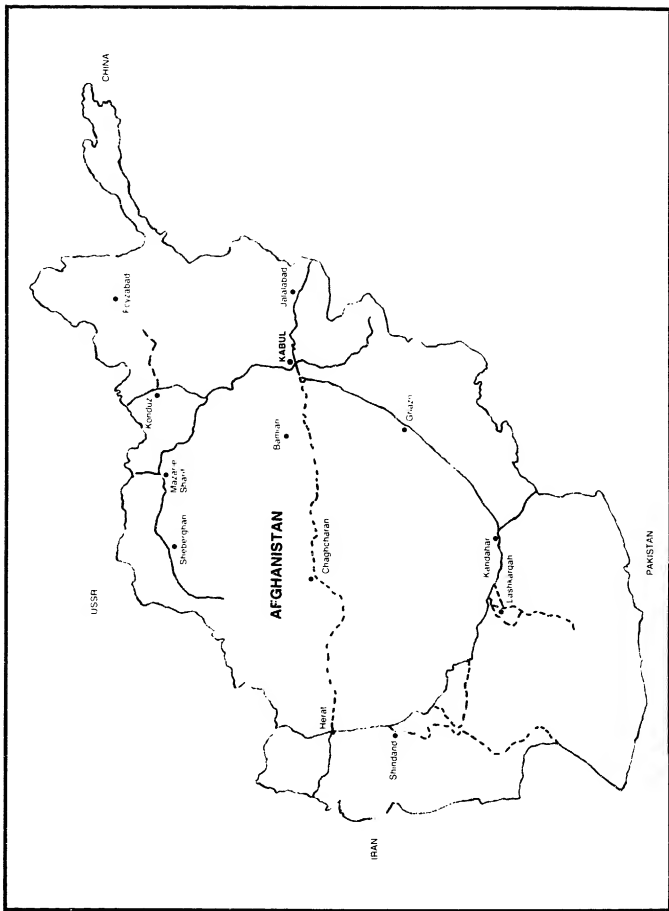


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1. INTRODUCTION

Amnesty International believes that torture in Afghanistan is widespread and systematic. It is most commonly inflicted on men and women prisoners held in the custody of the Khedamat-e E'tela'at-e Dawlati (KHAD), State Information Services, but is also sometimes reported from prisons and military establishments and when prisoners are taken in the course of armed conflict in the countryside. It includes severe beatings, electric shocks and many other forms of physical abuse. Prisoners have suffered permanent injury from torture and several are reported to have died as a result. There are consistent accounts of the complicity of Soviet personnel through their presence during interrogation under torture. Conditions in prisons and detention centres sometimes amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

1.1 Torture under Successive Afghan Governments

Torture in Afghanistan was already a major concern of Amnesty International before the government headed by President Babrak Karmal was established on 27 December 1979, following the intervention of the armed forces of the Soviet Union and the overthrow of the government of President Hafizullah Amin.

During the government of President Mohammad Daud, who assumed office after the King, Mohammad Zahir Shah, had been ousted by a military coup in 1973, hundreds of political prisoners were reported to be held without trial. Amnesty International received reports that torture was being practised, particularly during the period of pre-trial interrogation. Amnesty International on several occasions expressed its concern to President Daud's government about the allegations of torture, as well as about the application of the death penalty and the procedures of military tribunals, but received no response from the government.

On 27 April 1978 President Daud was himself overthrown and killed in another military coup which brought to power the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) under the Presidency of Noor Mohammad Taraki. In its September 1979 report, Violations of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (AI Index ASA 11/04/79), Amnesty International stated that it had received a substantial number of allegations that political prisoners were being subjected to torture under the new government and that some had died as a result, and that many political prisoners were being executed without trial.

On 16 September 1979, the then Prime Minister Hafizullah Amin ousted President Taraki, whose death was subsequently announced. Further evidence of a pattern of gross human rights violations came to light: the government itself began publishing a list which it said included some 12,000 names of prisoners in Kabul jails who had died since April 1978. On 27 December 1979 President Amin was himself killed in a military coup in which the armed forces of the Soviet Union were involved. He was replaced as President and as General Secretary of the PDPA by Babrak Karmal. An Amnesty International delegation which visited Kabul in February 1980 found that, in addition to the killings or

"disappearances" of thousands of prisoners, torture had been systematically practised in the one-and-a-half year period up to December 1979. Interviews with torture victims confirmed the frequent use of electric shocks, prolonged beatings, pulling out of fingernails, burning of the skin, threatened executions and sleep deprivation. Torture had been carried out routinely in Kabul at a building at the back of the Ministry of Interior, and at the five or six interrogation centres of the Kargari Astekhabarati Muassessa (KAM), Workers' Intelligence Bureau, the government intelligence agency established after April 1978.

President Babrak Karmal's first radio broadcast referred to "the torture machine" of Hafizullah Amin which he said had been broken (TASS, 27 December 1979). For several days in January 1980 the Kabul New Times carried the testimony of victims of torture under the Taraki and Amin governments. The new government announced that the KAM was to be abolished, stating that its predecessors had turned the agency's functions "into tools of their personal government to strangle and terrorize their opponents" (Kabul New Times, 12 January 1980). Amnesty International's delegation received assurances from President Babrak Karmal and all government officials they spoke to that there would be no more torture. The Minister of Justice stated that the government considered the prohibition of torture to be absolute and that no person would be subjected to torture, even if there were a foreign threat to the country. Article 30 of the Fundamental Principles of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA), brought into effect on 21 April 1980 by proclamation of the Revolutionary Council pending the adoption of a full constitution, declared that "Torture, persecution and punishment contrary to human dignity are not permissible".

A general amnesty was declared on 28 December 1979 and thousands of prisoners were released although thousands more were found to have "disappeared". However a number of officials of the previous administration were imprisoned, and large scale arrests recommenced following civil disturbances in Kabul in late February 1980. They were accompanied by the first reports of torture under the new government. From 1981 onwards, Amnesty International received testimony from released political prisoners themselves of their torture under the government of President Babrak Karmal. From this testimony, Amnesty International has concluded that torture has been widespread and systematic in the period since 1980.

1.2 Amnesty International's Concerns in Afghanistan

Torture is only one of Amnesty International's concerns in Afghanistan. Its other concerns are:

- reports of extrajudicial executions committed by Soviet troops supported by Afghan military personnel. Some of the victims are armed opponents of the government who had been detained, but many others are apparently non-combatants suspected only of sympathizing with armed opposition groups or allegedly killed in reprisal for attacks on government forces or in apparently random attacks intended to intimidate the local population.

- the imprisonment of thousands of political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience imprisoned on account of the non-violent exercise of their

fundamental human rights, such as freedom of expression and freedom of association. Other prisoners accused of activities in support of armed opposition movements are held without formal charge or trial or imprisoned after political trials which do not conform to internationally established legal standards.

- the imposition of the death penalty, including its use in cases involving politically motivated violent crimes, heard by special revolutionary courts without right of appeal. Amnesty International recorded 77 death sentences and 68 executions officially reported in 1984, and 40 death sentences officially reported in 1985, but believed these represented only a proportion of the total number of cases in which death sentences were imposed and carried out. It appealed to President Karmal not to carry out these death sentences and also referred these cases to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on summary or arbitrary executions.

1.3 Access to Information

The situation in Afghanistan has made the collection and verification of information relating to Amnesty International's concerns difficult. Official sources provide almost no relevant information, and the Afghan news media are wholly government-controlled. Foreign journalists who have been granted official access to Afghanistan have visited the country in circumstances which have not enabled them to report on human rights issues. After the capture of a French journalist by Soviet troops in Afghanistan, the Soviet Ambassador to Pakistan told representatives of the French press on 5 October 1984 that journalists accompanying armed opposition groups into Afghanistan would "from now on be eliminated".

The UN Commission on Human Rights recommended in March 1984 that a Special Rapporteur be appointed to "examine the human rights situation in Afghanistan". Before the appointment, the Afghan Government observer at the Commission stated that the Special Rapporteur would not be permitted to enter the country. Repeated requests by the Special Rapporteur to the Afghan Government for permission to visit Afghanistan have received no reply. In July 1985 the initial report of Afghanistan on its observance of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was considered by the Human Rights Committee, the body of experts created by the Covenant to monitor implementation of its provisions. Members of the Committee regretted that the report and the statement of the representative of Afghanistan referred only to the Constitution of Afghanistan and legal texts, and not to the actual situation in the country.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has so far been authorized to act inside Afghanistan only on two occasions--during brief missions in 1980 and 1982--in spite of repeated offers of services to the Afghan Government and representations to the Government of the USSR. In January 1980 the ICRC received authorization to visit, regularly and without witnesses, all political and so-called "security" prisoners in Afghanistan as well as all persons captured in combat. Two ICRC delegates, one of them a doctor, visited Kabul's Pul-e Charkhi prison in February and April where they saw 42 and 385 detainees respectively. However from April the ICRC delegates found their activities more and more restricted. The authorities refused to extend the delegates' visas and they were recalled in June 1980. Two years later, in June

1982, agreement was reached in principle on the return of an ICRC mission to Kabul, and in August/September 1982 an ICRC delegation visited Block I of Pul-e Charkhi prison, where they had access to 338 convicted prisoners and spoke without witnesses to 66 of them. The delegates left in October at the express request of the government which had asked them to discontinue their mission. In April 1986 ICRC delegates visited Afghanistan for the first time since 1982 and again discussed access to detainees. The ICRC has expressed its hopes for a favourable outcome to further contacts.

Thus in recent years the Afghan Government has allowed international observers only the most limited access to the country. Amnesty International has, however, been able to interview former political prisoners, most of them victims of torture, after they have left Afghanistan, in Pakistan, India and European countries of asylum. Although the accounts of refugees undoubtedly sometimes contain inaccuracies and may be suspected of bias, much of the information provided has been consistent, and it has been possible to check against each other accounts which were provided independently, by informants who came from different backgrounds and different parts of the country. These accounts have been confirmed by interviews with former government officials who have not themselves been the victims of torture but who were familiar with the system of interrogation.

The testimony of released prisoners usually relates to torture carried out some years before, since torture has been inflicted during interrogation and this has been followed by a period of imprisonment; indeed, Amnesty International continues to receive confirmatory evidence of torture carried out under the administrations of Presidents Taraki and Amin. This report however relies on and reproduces testimony relating to torture only during the period since Babrak Karmal became President on 27 December 1979. It includes reports of torture from 1980 onwards, and Amnesty International has received recent confirmation that the pattern of torture it describes has continued into 1986. Most people giving testimony to Amnesty International have asked to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals against relatives in Afghanistan.

Amnesty International has communicated its concerns, including detailed allegations of torture, to the Afghan Government on several occasions. In a letter from its Secretary General to President Babrak Karmal in October 1983, Amnesty International expressed its grave concern about the torture and ill-treatment of detainees, and called for an inquiry into reports of torture, the findings of which should be made public, and for the trial of officials found to be responsible. In November 1984, Amnesty International's Secretary General wrote to invite President Babrak Karmal to respond to a detailed statement of the organization's concerns, including torture, which it also presented to the UN Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan. Amnesty International has received no reply from the Afghan Government to these communications of its concerns.

1.4 Abuses by opposition groups

Amnesty International condemns as a matter of principle the torture or killing of prisoners under any circumstances, whether by governmental forces or non-governmental forces such as armed opposition groups. There have been repeated reports that prisoners, in particular alleged KHAD officials, have been

executed by opposition groups after being captured in Afghanistan. In December 1981, Amnesty International received reports that leaders of the Hezb-e Islami, which had captured three Soviet soldiers, had stated that the three would probably be tried under Islamic law and executed; in the absence of direct channels of communication to the group, the organization conveyed its concerns to the United Nations with a request that it bring these to the attention of the group. It also publicly appealed to both sides in the fighting to halt executions of prisoners. Amnesty International has not itself interviewed victims of torture by armed opposition groups within Afghanistan, but is aware of a number of reports by journalists who have travelled inside the country that people taken prisoner by such groups have been tortured and executed. For example, one journalist reported seeing an Afghan prisoner led around by a heavy chain inside a Hezb-e Islami camp in Kandahar province: "the soles of both his feet had been cut and one of his knees had been crippled during torture" (Sunday Times, London, 11 August 1985).

Such reports have also occasionally been featured in the Soviet and Afghan official news media. In one of the most recent such reports a Soviet soldier stated that he had been beaten and deprived of food and drink after capture by four members of an armed opposition group: he alleged that this treatment had occurred after he had been taken across the border into Pakistan (TASS, 11 December 1985).

2. PLACES OF TORTURE: THE KHAD

Most reports of torture relate to people held in the custody of the Khedamat-e Etele'at-e Dawlati (KHAD), State Information Services. The KHAD is the third in the succession of intelligence agencies established under PDPA governments. The government of President Taraki established Da Afghanistan da Gato da Satalo Adara (AGSA), Organization for the Protection of the Interests of Afghanistan. After he was replaced by President Amin in 1979, the agency was re-established as the Kargari Astekhbarati Muassessa (KAM), Workers' Intelligence Bureau. When the KAM was abolished by the government of President Karmal in January 1980, the KHAD was established in its place:

"It is hereby announced that hereafter there will exist in Afghanistan no such organization to strangle, pressure or torture the people. On the contrary, there will be established within the government framework an intelligence service to protect democratic freedoms, national independence and sovereignty, the interests of the revolution, the people and the state, as well as neutralise the plots hatched by external enemies of Afghanistan under the PDPA leadership."

(Kabul New Times, 12 January 1980)

The Director of the KHAD from its establishment in 1980 until November 1985 was Dr Najibullah, who from 1981 was a member of the Political Bureau of the PDPA; in May 1986 he succeeded President Babrak Karmal as General Secretary of the PDPA. In January 1986, on its sixth anniversary, the KHAD was upgraded to the status of a ministry, the Ministry of State Security. The present Minister of State Security is a member of the PDPA's Central Committee.

There is a separate military intelligence agency, known as KHAD-e Nezami, military KHAD, under the direction of the Ministry of Defence. A third security service, the Sarandov or security police, is responsible to the Ministry of the Interior. Torture has been reported from both the KHAD-e Nezami office in Kabul and the Ministry of Interior building.

There are central and local KHAD interrogation centres in Kabul, and one or more KHAD centres in provincial cities. Among the cases reported to Amnesty International, the largest number allege that torture occurred in the two Kabul centres known as Shashdarak and Sedarat. The most common pattern is for people arrested to be taken first to the KHAD headquarters and primary interrogation centre at Shashdarak for initial interrogation, and subsequently transferred to the central interrogation office at Sedarat for interrogation over a long period, which may extend to several months. In other cases, initial interrogation accompanied by torture is reported to have taken place at other KHAD offices to which detainees are taken on arrest, before transfer to Sedarat. In some cases they are taken to Sedarat directly. Other KHAD offices in Kabul from which torture has been reported are offices numbered Three, Four and Five; former private houses known as the Ahmad Shah Khan house and the house in Wazir Akbar Khan; and the KHAD office in the Howzai Barikat district.

Following interrogation and sometimes prolonged detention in KHAD centres, prisoners in Kabul may be transferred to the main prison, Pul-e Charkhi, outside

Kabul city. Pul-e Charkhi prison consists of several blocks, responsibility for which is said to be divided between the Ministry of the Interior and the KHAD, now the Ministry of State Security. Most prisoners interviewed said they had not been subjected to further torture once they had been transferred to prison, but torture by the KHAD within Pul-e Charkhi is reported to have occurred in a minority of cases, chiefly in Block I, as well as ill-treatment by the prison authorities.



Pul-e Charkhi prison consists of several blocks. It was built originally for 5,000 prisoners but Amnesty International believes that the number held there is now well in excess of 10,000.

Amnesty International has also received reports of torture at KHAD centres in the provincial cities of Bamian, Ghazni, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Lashkargah and Pol-e Khomri, and in the prisons of Kunduz and Mazar-e Sharif, although some people arrested in other cities were taken immediately to Kabul for interrogation in Sedarat.

In Kandahar, the headquarters of the KHAD are said to be in the former house of Abdul Rahim Latif in Shahr-e Nau district, but most torture is reported to be practised in a building known as the Musa Khan building. Another KHAD centre in Kandahar from which torture was reported was described as Darwazan (Herat Gate).

In addition to KHAD centres and prisons, Amnesty International has interviewed people who said they were tortured in military posts. There are

also reports that people have been tortured in the course of military operations by Soviet and Afghan Government armed forces in the countryside: foreign doctors have reported treating injuries which were said to be the result of such torture, including burns alleged to have been deliberately inflicted.

3. REASONS FOR ARREST

Those reported to have been subjected to torture include government and police officials, teachers, students, businessmen, shopkeepers and private sector employees of various kinds. Many are women. A wide range of circumstances led to their arrests.

The earliest waves of arrests in the lifetime of the present government accompanied demonstrations by students, including many young women. The first demonstrations were in February 1980 and they began again with the April anniversary that year of the coming to power of the PDPA. Such demonstrations are reported to have been largely peaceful until force was used to suppress them.

Others arrested and tortured have been people who acknowledge their direct involvement in violent opposition to the government, for example by setting off explosions or concealing weapons. Many more have been suspected of membership of or contact with the parties involved in armed opposition. In some cases this was the result of denunciation by other people; in other cases, such suspicions appear to have been founded on the activities of relatives. A 29-year-old Kabul bank employee said he was one of five male family members arrested in September 1982 after his younger brother had confessed under torture by the KHAD to involvement with an armed opposition group: he himself was then tortured and detained for four and a half months. Having relatives outside Afghanistan may contribute to arrest: a former government official in his sixties was arrested, tortured and imprisoned from April 1981 to January 1982 after his son-in-law defected from an Afghan Embassy, and a 29-year-old police communications specialist attributed his torture by the KHAD in April 1982 and accusations of espionage to the presence of two cousins in the USA.

The discovery of what are taken to be written indications of opposition to the government appears to have led to other arrests. Some of those reporting torture had been found to be in possession of shabnamah or night letters (opposition leaflets circulated clandestinely): they included an employee of a private fertilizer company arrested in Kabul in September 1982 who had received some night letters from a cousin at the university, several young women between 1980 and October 1984; and a Kabul shop-keeper arrested in February 1985 after he was seen to have picked up and started reading a night letter which he said he found lying on the road in front of his shop. A former UN agency employee, who was himself detained, attributed the arrest and torture of his son in late 1981 to the discovery of some notes in a book on Marxism found during a search of his house: "it was some comments I had made in the book comparing the freedoms of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union".

Others were arrested because they were thought to be trying to cross the border into Pakistan, and thus perhaps to have contact with armed opposition groups there. A 28-year-old woman detained in Sedarat had been arrested in Jalalabad (which lies between Kabul and Peshawar in Pakistan, close to the border) in mid-1985, when she had indeed been attempting to join her husband in Pakistan. A 24-year-old Kabul University student had been arrested with three friends, also in Jalalabad, where he said they had gone to celebrate the Afghan New Year in March 1981: they too were accused of trying to enter Pakistan. An

engineer was arrested on his return from India in February 1981 and imprisoned without trial until July 1983, and a doctor shortly after his return from Iran at the beginning of 1985, apparently on suspicion of having made contacts with opposition elements while outside Afghanistan. A prominent Kabul merchant who was arrested in November 1980 and tortured was accused of having travelled within the country to Mazar-e Sharif and Kandahar to sow discontent against the government.

Many of those interviewed by Amnesty International were eventually released without ever having been formally charged or sentenced. A 42-year-old teacher detained for seven months until his release in October 1984, and a 28-year-old shop-keeper detained for four months until his release in June 1985, both reported being driven into the centre of Kabul to be released in the street there. A few ex-prisoners were said to have had their innocence explicitly acknowledged. A 29-year-old student testified that he was released from Shashdarak at the beginning of 1984 after having made a "confession" under torture and threat of further torture, when a KHAD official acknowledged that they had mistaken him for another man of the same name: he stated that the record of his interrogation was destroyed in front of him and that he was required to sign a statement promising not to reveal that he had been tortured. The prominent Kabul merchant, a one-time member of the National Assembly under President Daud, stated that he had received an apology in person from senior officials including Dr Najibullah, the Head of the KHAD, who said his detention and torture had been the result of incorrect information.

4. THE NATURE OF TORTURE

From the testimonies of many former detainees Amnesty International has been able to identify a consistent pattern of the types of torture and other ill-treatment inflicted on prisoners as well as of their conditions of detention.

Beatings routinely take place during the early stages of interrogation soon after arrest, and frequently continue throughout the time detainees are held in KHAD custody. A typical account is that of the Kabul shop-keeper arrested in February 1985:

"I was taken to Shashdarak. Within five minutes of my arrival they started questioning me. 'Which party do you belong to? What are your activities?' I was afraid and defensive. I said I didn't know who had thrown the night letter in front of my shop. After another five or ten minutes, they started abusing me and beating me. Two men took turns to beat me for some hours on the first day. They hit me, punched me, kicked me for an hour or two every day during my first week of detention.... They started beating me again after my third week of detention. For about 45 minutes or an hour every day or otherwise at night, the beatings continued for two and a half months.... I was not beaten during the last month or so of my detention. After the scars from my beatings had healed, they released me."

Another report is that of the 24-year-old student arrested in March 1981 on suspicion of making his way to Pakistan, who was held for about 50 days in the KHAD centre in Jalalabad before being transferred to the central jail there:

"After three days the interrogation started and I was beaten with sticks and once they tied me to a tree in the courtyard while beating me A friend of mine, [name given], who now lives in Kabul, was tied to a table and beaten, and when I saw him after the torture he was sitting sideways on a chair, half lying, because his back was full of wounds from the beating."

Prisoners report being beaten with several kinds of instruments and abused in a variety of ways:

"After about three hours they took me into the interrogation room.... First they began to show me the torture instruments. These were wire cables, wooden sticks and rubber lashes.... They tried to get me to talk but as I did not say anything they began to slap me very hard on the face. They began to beat me with the lash and with the wooden sticks. At about 12 midnight they took me from KHAD-e Atrafi [suburban KHAD - another name for the KHAD centre in Wazir Akbar Khan] to Shashdarak.... Without even asking me a question, they began to beat and kick me, so much that my nose began to bleed.... Someone grabbed my hair and started to pull.... They laid me on the floor and a very big and fat man trod on my stomach. They also put my hand on the wall and hit it with a wooden stick."

[26-year-old student, KHAD centre in Wazir Akbar Khan and Shashdarak, detained late 1984]

Many prisoners reported being deprived of sleep and required to stand for prolonged periods. The same prisoner just quoted further describes his treatment in Shashdarak:

"They sent me to a yard where I had to stand on one foot all the time. The weather was very cold and they forced me to take everything off except for a shirt and my trousers. And this was not a torture peculiar to younger people. I saw old men with white beards who had to stand there on one foot. We could not sit down because there were people who would beat and hit us with lashes and wooden sticks, slapping and kicking and so on.... I was kept in that yard for a whole week. I had to stand two to three hours on one foot every day."

Many other prisoners describe being forced to stand or to do exercises to the point of collapse:

"During the questioning I was also forced to do physical exercises until I collapsed and when I was lying on the floor they kicked me. Once I had to stand against the wall and keep my nose on a line drawn on the wall."

[35-year-old teacher, Shashdarak, September 1984]

"Once we were forced to stand in the sun for almost five hours and many of the prisoners fainted. I was also forced to do exercises with a heavy metal sheet on my back and when I couldn't straighten my legs the torturers pulled my ears ..."

[24-year-old student, KHAD centre, Jalalabad, between March and May 1981]

In other cases, too, such treatment was exacerbated by prisoners being exposed to sun or forced to stand in water or snow. A 37-year-old woman prisoner reported being forced to stand partially buried in snow in Shashdarak during her detention from January to September 1982. The prisoner who was forced to stand in the sun in the KHAD centre in Jalalabad subsequently, after his transfer to jail there, witnessed prisoners said to have attempted to escape being forced to stand in a water tank during cold winter weather.

Some prisoners reported being only threatened with electric shock torture, but many others reported being subjected to it, apparently quite routinely at an early stage as well as later stages of their interrogation. The most common electric shock torture device is referred to as the "telephone": a small machine that looks like an old-fashioned telephone with wires that are attached to the victim's body and a handle which is turned or pulled to apply the current. Other prisoners simply referred to a small box with wires coming out of it.

"They started beating me and after a while I was brought to a room with a square-shaped machine with wires. The wires were tied first to my fingers and then a KHAD agent started pulling the handle and I got strong electric shocks. Then they fastened a wire to my tongue and

when they pulled the handle I became unconscious. This electric torture lasted for more than two hours."

[35-year-old businessman, KHAD centre, Musa Khan building, Kandahar, late 1981]

"The soldiers took me to another room. That was the 'Iron Room'. It was small, three by two metres. No sound could possibly pass through its iron walls. In a corner there was a machine which had a distinctive handle. It had wires attached to it. Two of the wires were bare. The machine was as big as a normal typewriter. By turning the handle it would produce an electric current: the faster the handle was turned, the stronger the electric current became. They attached the bare wires to my feet. The room was wet. The interrogation started again. The soldiers left the room while the interrogators remained. They began to turn the handle on the machine. I cannot describe what I felt at that time. All my body was vibrating. The pressure was harder on my heart. I jumped and fell down several times. On the one hand the floor was wet, on the other the current was strong. I cannot tell you how long this lasted. Eventually I became unconscious."

[22-year-old student, Shashdarak, winter 1982/3]

"When I was brought to Shashdarak they started asking me questions about a coup and some names involved in the alleged coup, but I told them that I didn't know anything. I was forced to lie on the floor and they placed a chair on my stomach. One man was sitting on the chair and one on my head and one on my knees. Then they brought in the telephone and tied the wires to my toes and started pulling the handle. One of the men told me to move my feet if I wanted to answer. All the while one man was prepared to make notes."

[35-year-old teacher, Shashdarak, September 1984]

Some prisoners reported receiving electric shocks administered with sticks or batons, and others referred to the use of an electric chair.

"During these months, they also used an electric rod on me five or six times. They used to place it against my chin, my belly or in my armpits. Two or three times I lapsed into semi-consciousness while being tortured."

[28-year-old shop-keeper, Shashdarak, February-May 1985]

"Beating was routine and then I got electric torture with a wire connected directly to a socket in the wall. They tied the wires to my toes and ears. And once I was asked to sit in a steel chair. I saw the wires from the chair and when they switched on the electricity I jumped high in the air."

[30-year-old government official, Sedarat, 1981]

"There was a chair on which they made you sit. They tied us to it and connected the wires to the electricity. Then they pushed a switch.

The chair turned around in a circle. I was tortured like this for 15 days, between one and four in the morning."

[18-year-old female student, Shashdarak, October/November 1984]

Electric shock torture was reported from inside Pul-e Charkhi prison in Kabul and from military posts and detention centres as well as from KHAD interrogation centres. A 30-year-old man released from Ghazni prison in December 1983 reported having been detained for the first 10 days after his arrest in November 1982 at an army outpost near Ghazni, where he was given electric shocks from a "temporary torture machine made out of three vehicle batteries". Electric shock torture in military custody was also reported by a 23-year-old student imprisoned from April to December 1983, who went on to describe an apparently more sophisticated machine in use at a KHAD centre in Kandahar:

"I was arrested by a unit of Afghan soldiers and detained for two days in a military detention centre. The second day in this centre I got electric shocks with the 'telephone'. They tied wires to my toes and before they started moving the handle they poured water on me.

"From the military detention centre I was transferred to the KHAD investigation centre Darwazan (Herat Gate)... After two days I was taken to a room with a machine that looked like a computer screen. There were two small lamps on this machine, one yellow and one red, and from the machine a wire to a small device which looked like a microphone.

"When they pressed this microphone on my body I got strong electric shocks. This room with the machine was on the first floor and all of my 16 cell-mates were taken to this room and got the same torture. Many of them fainted after the torture and when they were brought back to the cell they were dizzy and felt sick.

"I got these shocks on my penis and sometimes I still bleed when urinating. I was three months in the KHAD centre and I was tortured with this machine eight or nine times. After the torture we were so weak that the soldiers had to drag us back to our cells."

Other injuries reported as a result of electric shock torture included burnt skin, impaired hearing after shocks administered with wires to the ears, and impaired speech after shocks administered with wires to the tongue. Dousing with water was said to be used as a means of intensifying electric shock torture.

A 19-year-old Kabul University student, arrested in August 1984 following an explosion in the faculty of which he was a student, reported being tortured in Shashdarak with a device designed to subject the victim to partial suffocation:

"My interrogation started on the second day, at 6 am. I was taken to a room with two chairs and a small table. There were two interrogators. They put this 'black bag' over my head and pumped it up, preventing me from breathing. It was made of rubber inside, and thick material outside, with a valve on top. I was suffocated inside this three

times. Each time it lasted one or two minutes. I didn't completely lose consciousness. I had heard about the 'black bag' before: one of my friends had had it used on him."

Several other forms of serious physical abuse were reported. These included prisoners having a bottle or in one case a heated wire thrust into the rectum, having fingernails pulled out or needles inserted under them, being cut with a knife, having a chair placed on the stomach or hands and sat upon, being burnt with cigarettes, being scalded with very hot water, and having hair torn out. Several prisoners reported being forced to eat or drink until they vomited, or being denied the opportunity to relieve themselves, sometimes by a string being tied around the penis.

Women prisoners reported being directly subjected to physical torture of these kinds. But there are also consistent accounts from women of being forced to witness the torture of male prisoners and, in three separate cases, of being incarcerated in the presence of a dead body.

"One man was tortured in front of my eyes. For two hours they hit him with firewood and scratched his body so that the skin came off. They hit him with an electric stick on his shoulders and on his calves. The man lost consciousness and was dragged out from the room. Then I fainted away.

"The worst torture for me was when I saw [name given]'s dead body. It was the second time I was in Sedarat. He had been shot in the head. His arms and legs were bloody. I fainted away."

[25-year-old teacher, Sedarat, between August and November 1981]

"One night when I was taken to the investigation room a man was lying on the floor. He was dead. His face was swollen up and blueish. The rest of his body was covered with a blanket. The KHAD people said that they had tortured him to death and told me: 'That's what happens to those who do not speak.' They wanted to frighten me so that I would speak."

[26-year-old former student, Sedarat, between May and October 1980]

Several prisoners gave the names of fellow detainees they said had died as a result of torture.

"There is something else I should mention. Several days after my arrest a college friend, [name given], was also arrested and brought to Sedarat. He was in my cell for two to three weeks. The beatings and torture soon took their toll of him and after a while he was transferred to a military hospital. I learned later that he died there one week later from his injuries. That was the only death that I knew of personally in Sedarat. I heard stories of others and it would not surprise me in the least, but I cannot tell you of others."

[25-year-old student, Sedarat, 1980]

"I was in the same room as [name given], a boy who had been transferred

with me. He was being interrogated too. I saw that he died in front of me when they hit his head against the wall. They held his hair and banged his head against the wall. I saw him die in front of me.

"They told me I would be facing the same fate if I did not tell them what they were looking for."

[16-year-old school student, Pul-e Charkhi, 1984]

In other cases, the families of prisoners reported that the prison authorities had stopped accepting clothes and other articles for their relatives and believed that this indicated that they had died. Deaths were not formally notified although in some cases they were informally confirmed. Since there have also been consistent accounts from released inmates of fellow prisoners being taken away for execution, it is impossible to conclude in individual cases whether a prisoner has been executed or has died as a result of torture. Threatened execution was frequently reported as a means of torture.

5. ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT OF SOVIET PERSONNEL IN TORTURE

The KHAD is reported to have Soviet advisers at its main offices, and many of the testimonies available to Amnesty International refer to the presence of Soviet personnel when prisoners are being interrogated under torture.

In many of these cases, prisoners state that Soviet personnel are present during torture and participate in or direct interrogation while the physical application of torture is left to Afghans.

"While I was in the Musa Khan building Soviet advisers came to the building on three occasions, two of them in uniform and one a civilian. They were always putting questions about mujahedin in the city but they never participated in the torture."

[35-year-old businessman, KHAD centre, Kandahar, autumn 1981]

"I never saw any Soviets at Pul-e Charkhi. At Shashdarak and Sedarat, I saw Afghans of KHAD giving documents to some Soviets and seeking orders from those Soviets."

[42-year-old teacher, March-October 1984]

"There were more than 10 people in the torture room and one of them was a Soviet officer. Everyone knew that he was a Soviet and it seemed that he was in charge of the investigation. This Soviet was in the room with the computer screen many times when I was tortured, at least on three or four occasions. But he never participated in the torture himself."

[22-year-old student, KHAD centre, Darwazan (Herat Gate), Kandahar, April 1983]

"My interrogator was an Afghan but very often he was joined by an interpreter and a Soviet who also sat by the table. I was never tortured by Soviets but I saw many Soviets in rooms where torture was taking place. But I don't know if the Soviets participated in the torture or if they gave orders for torture."

[24-year-old student, KHAD centre, Jalalabad, March - May 1981]

"In all the interrogations, Soviet officials were present. I could identify them from their faces and from their language. They all spoke in Russian, not in Dari. They normally act as advisers. They draft questions. In my own interrogations they drafted questions and dictated them in Russian to the KHAD agent who would then ask the questions.... The act of torture is done by the KHAD agents. Soviets were present but they only gave orders and did not take part in the actual torture themselves".

[26-year-old student, Wazir Akbar Khan and Shashdarak, October 1984-January 1985]

"About 2 am on the third night, two soldiers came. They told me to come with them. They took me through a long corridor. They took me into a room where there were three people - two on chairs sitting in front of me and one with me, one standing by me. For about 10 minutes they sat without speaking. Then one of them went out of the room, and in about five minutes came back with another man.

"The man he had with him had green eyes and was wearing the clothes of a Soviet officer [Kala-e Dagari], but there were no insignia on the shoulders. The other people stood up when he came into the room. The other people in the room were Afghans from the KHAD. The Soviet officer sat in the KHAD officer's seat, and the KHAD officer told me to come over. The KHAD man told me to sit in another chair, an armchair, and asked, 'do you know what these things on the wall are?' I said, 'No, I don't know.' The KHAD officer said, 'If you don't speak, we will kill you tonight in this room and send your body out to your friends.' Then he asked me about the jeep, about my father again, and about my father's collaborators, people who associated with my father.

"I denied knowing anything about the jeep. I said, 'My father was killed in prison, and I served in the military, that's all.' When I denied it, the soldiers began to slap me. Then the soldiers kicked me with their boots. While they punched and kicked me, they asked me to speak. For the whole time that they were beating me, the man with the green eyes said nothing. Then after about an hour, he said something in Russian to the men who were hitting me. He went to the other side of the room and brought back something that looked like a small racket. It was a rod with something attached to it at the tip. He gave it to the KHAD people. They touched it to me twice, once on my hand and once to my side. I felt an electric shock, and I fell over.

"They said, 'You should speak. We will stay here in the room until the morning with these instruments.'"

[25-year-old merchant, Shashdarak, June 1985]

In a few cases, allegations extend to some actual participation by Soviet personnel in the physical application of torture.

"The KHAD agents showed me a notebook with a phone number of the US Embassy and groups of numbers. I said that the book was not mine and that they could compare the handwriting. Once in the investigation room a Soviet ordered some Afghans to go and get the torture instruments and one of them came back with the 'telephone'. Then they said that I still had time to confess. They applied the wires to my fingers and first one Afghan pulled the handle and after that the Soviet also pulled the handle once."

[29-year-old bank employee, Shashdarak, late 1982]

A 39-year-old farmer arrested in the summer of 1983 and accused of burning the school in his village also alleged that Soviet personnel connected the wires to his toes when he was tortured in Sedarat and participated in various forms of

beating.

Allegations that Soviet personnel are present during torture and give orders for it to be inflicted have been made not only regarding those present in KHAD centres but also regarding military personnel in the field.

"I was arrested by a military unit and detained for 10 days in an army outpost. There were also Soviets in this post and they many times gave orders to beat me. Of course, I didn't understand what they said but as soon as they had shouted something the Afghans started beating me. I also got electric shocks with a temporary torture machine made out of three vehicle batteries. They were connected to each other and from them they had wires to my ears, toes and fingers. This electric shock torture I got some 20 times and sometimes the Soviets gave orders for this torture."

[30-year-old interpreter, near Ghazni, November 1982]

6. TRIALS

Most detainees remain in KHAD custody in Sedarat or another KHAD centre throughout the active phase of their interrogation, which may last for many months. During this period, they are not brought before a judge, have no access to a lawyer and are not able to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest and detention. When the KHAD has reached a conclusion regarding their case, they may either be released, sometimes after having been required to sign a statement, or transferred to prison.

Of those transferred to prison, some remain detained without formal charge or trial until their eventual release; indeed, one report suggests that a section of Pul-e Charkhi prison is reserved for "prisoners of unknown fate". Others undergo a form of trial before a special revolutionary court, accounts of which are consistent in indicating the brevity of the proceedings.

"I declared myself innocent of the accusations of involvement in anti-government activities. The judge could not find anything incriminating in my case and accused me of 'misuse of democratic rights'. After a couple of minutes the judge asked the guard to take me out and I was kept outside the room for some more minutes before we went back to the courtroom. When I entered the room the judge had already left and a lower court official handed me the sentence of two years' imprisonment. It was obvious that the sentence was decided long before I was brought to the court."

[26-year-old student, Kabul, early 1982]

"After two months I was taken back to the KHAD centre. A delegation had arrived from Kabul to issue sentences. They looked through my file and I was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for counter-revolutionary activities and desertion. I got a relatively short sentence but that was because I was arrested unarmed. Those who had been arrested while in possession of arms normally got between 15 and 20 years. This long sentence was also given to those in whose homes the authorities had found weapons."

[30-year-old interpreter, Ghazni, early 1983]

"After seven months they took me again to Sedarat where the so-called revolutionary court sits. They had already given me a charge sheet in Pul-e Charkhi. They accused me of being a member of anti-government organizations. We had to write our own defence statements. We said we were not members of any anti-government organizations and did not think we were guilty because there was no evidence to prove that.

"The court itself was a fairly big room. There was a judge, a secretary and a public prosecutor. The secretary read the accusation against us and told us why we were being tried. He then asked us to defend ourselves. There were all the same old accusations. We of course denied all of them.

"They took us to the waiting room that was next to the court. Our fathers had come to find out about the outcome. The court then asked them to go in. They told us later on that the judge had told them he would release us despite our crimes, but that there was a condition: we were sentenced to two years, with effect from the day of our arrest, but the rest of our sentence was suspended on the condition that we did not participate in any anti-government activities again. Our fathers told us that they had paid a lot of bribes to get us released...."

[22-year-old law student, Kabul, mid-1983]

No accounts suggest that prisoners tried by special revolutionary courts have had access to defence counsel or that either defence or prosecution witnesses are present. This is consistent with the experience of foreigners who have been detained (without being subjected to torture) and charged in Afghanistan. An Australian couple, Robert Williamson and Jennifer Lade, who stated that they had been kidnapped by tribesmen in Pakistan in May 1985 and taken into Afghanistan, were released before being brought to trial in December 1985, after having been charged with illegal entry and being associated with foreign intelligence agencies. After questioning over several months, Robert Williamson was asked to sign a summary of his interrogation, although he was unable to understand what he was signing. He was eventually given an English translation of a document submitted to the "President and Members of the Appropriate (Special) Revolutionary High Court of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan", containing a "Short Report of the Case". He was given writing materials to prepare his defence, and wrote asking for information about the Afghan legal system. He was told that no such information would be provided, and was again asked to prepare his defence. The couple were denied any access to legal representation throughout. This was also the case with a French doctor, Philippe Augoyard, tried and convicted in March 1983 by a special revolutionary court on charges of entering the country illegally for the purpose of assisting and spying for "counter-revolutionary rebels"; and a French journalist, Jacques Abouchar, tried and convicted in October 1984 by a special revolutionary court on charges of entering the country illegally.

The accounts of detainees are also consistent with the testimony of a former member of the Supreme Judicial Council, Mohammad Yusuf Azim, who left Afghanistan in early 1985 and who has been interviewed by Amnesty International. He stated that no defence counsel appear in cases before special revolutionary courts, nor are witnesses called. Members of special revolutionary courts are PDPA members and in some cases recruited from the KHAD itself; most do not have a legal or judicial background. Hearings are not public and relatives are unaware that trials are taking place, although a few trials are filmed for showing on television. He had personal knowledge of victims of torture and had seen people suffering from its after-effects.

A number of trials are reported on Kabul radio and in the press. The defendants are almost always people said to be members of particular armed opposition groups who are sentenced to death or to very long terms of imprisonment. In almost all those reported cases the accused are stated to have made confessions. In no case is there reference to the participation of defence counsel. The value apparently placed on confessions could constitute an inducement to torture and Amnesty International is aware of no case in which a confession has been rejected as having been extracted by such means.

7. CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

Conditions of detention are consistently reported to be such as to impose extreme hardship. These conditions appear to be deliberately created in some respects, especially during the period of interrogation; they also occur because of acute overcrowding and other inadequacies in longer term prison conditions.

In Sedarat, the KHAD central interrogation office in Kabul, detainees are often initially held in solitary confinement, and subsequently transferred to overcrowded cells.

"I was immediately brought to Sedarat [after arrest in February 1981] where I was kept in an isolation cell for two months and 17 days. During all this time the door was never opened. I got all my food through a small hole in the door and there was a primitive toilet in the cell."

"For the first 12 days of my detention in Sedarat [in June/July 1982], I was kept in solitary confinement. Thereafter I shared a cell with nine others. The cell was small and overcrowded. A small vent at ceiling height provided the only means of ventilation but did not allow the sun to penetrate the cell. We were not allowed out of the cell except when we were taken away for interrogation or to go to the toilet. Visits to the toilet were restricted to three in a 24-hour period. We were not permitted to go to the toilet outside the appointed times. We slept on thin mattresses, without a pillow. In the winter months, we were each provided with one blanket. Meals consisted of tea and one piece of hard bread for breakfast, soup and one piece of bread for lunch and, at night, one plate of rice which was sometimes mixed with vegetables. We were given meat once a week."

There is no communication of any kind with detainees in Shashdarak, and detainees in Sedarat are reportedly permitted no visits from relatives even during many months' detention. In some cases relatives were unable to find out where the detainees were held until they were transferred to prison, and most detainees reported that they thus received no change of clothes. However, recent information suggests that detainees in Sedarat are allowed to receive clean clothes, a letter from home and a small amount of money to buy toiletries every two weeks once they have been located by their relatives, although this is often not for six to eight weeks. Although the food in Sedarat appears barely adequate and prisoners are reported to display symptoms of scurvy, it is said to be considerably better than that provided in Pul-e Charkhi prison.

Pul-e Charkhi prison is said to have been built originally for 5,000 prisoners and was not completed when the first PDPA government came to power in 1978. Although it is reported to have been enlarged, there are persistent accounts of extreme overcrowding. Estimates of the total number of prisoners vary, but Amnesty international believes that it is probably well in excess of 10,000. One block is said to be occupied by ordinary criminal prisoners, but they are estimated to be not more than about 1,000 of the total in the prison. Most of those held in Pul-e Charkhi are suspected or convicted of political offences.

A wide variety of sizes of cell exist in its several blocks. Some of the prisoners interviewed by Amnesty International had shared cells with only one or not more than 10 others, but most had been in large halls shared by 150 or more prisoners. There were several reports of prisoners living in the corridors of Pul-e Charkhi because of the overcrowding. The most persistent complaint was of the acute scarcity of toilet facilities.

"... after this interrogation I was transferred to Pul-e Charkhi prison. There I spent most of my time [until released in July 1983] in a block with 24 cells with altogether 240 prisoners. It was so crowded that some prisoners had to stay in the corridor. For all these 240 prisoners there were only two toilets. There were always lines to the toilets and many were not able to wait for their turn and did it in their pants or on the floor."

"The first year in Pul-e Charkhi [commencing in 1981] I spent in a big hall meant for 150 prisoners but we were at least 400 inmates in that hall. There was only one toilet for all of us and many had to empty their bowels in their pants and there was always a terrible smell in the hall. During my time in prison I saw many prisoners die, the food was very bad and we never got any medicine."

Several reports stated that prisoners in Pul-e Charkhi share accommodation in circumstances which make it impossible for them all to lie down simultaneously to sleep; and cite skin diseases and diarrhoea, as well as bugs, lice and fleas, as common consequences of the unhygienic conditions.

A number of hunger-strikes and other protests over prison conditions have been reported from Pul-e Charkhi prison.

"The prisoners went on a hunger-strike in Block II during my stay there and put forward demands for better sanitary conditions. There were only six toilets for more than 1,000 prisoners and these toilets were open only a couple of hours a day. The authorities promised to meet the demands but as soon as the hunger-strike was over those who had participated were transferred to other blocks and I was taken to Block III. Six of the prisoners who had organized the hunger-strike were taken to Block I for torture."

This account is of events in 1982, but a hunger-strike in Pul-e Charkhi in 1985 and a hunger-strike in the prison of Mazar-e Sharif have also been reported.

Extreme overcrowding is similarly reported from other prisons in Afghanistan including Ghazni, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Mazar-e Sharif. In some cases, it has been said to be deliberately inflicted. The following account of a prisoner from Jalalabad also reports the use of fetters as a punishment:

"After 50 days in the KHAD centre [after arrest in March 1981] I was transferred to the central jail in Jalalabad and there I saw 25 prisoners in heavy fetters. They were accused of trying to escape and were put in an isolation cell for 45 days. They were not allowed to leave the cell during this time and the food was given to them through

a small hole in the door. Afterwards when these prisoners were taken out of the cell I could see that the cell was not bigger than maybe six by six metres. Once the 25 prisoners were put in a water tank in the courtyard of the prison where they had to stand from 9 pm to 5 pm the next day. This happened in the winter and it was cold weather during this time of the year. We could see the water tank which was in the courtyard not far from the jail office."

Amnesty International has received a second report of the use of fetters, from the KHAD centre, Musa Khan Building, Kandahar.

In addition to overcrowding, sanitation and poor food, the other principal complaints were of lack of mattresses, lack of heating in winter, damp cells, and inadequate medical attention. The last is of particular concern in view of the presence of infants with women detainees, for example in Sedarat.

Visits are sometimes permitted to those in prison. In cases known to Amnesty International, however, the first such visit has usually occurred long after arrest. For example, in the case of a 26-year-old Kabul University student, it was two months after his arrest in December 1981 that his family managed first to obtain information about him, and 15 months before he could first be visited. A 42-year-old teacher detained for about three weeks in Shashdarak and Sedarat and subsequently in Pul-e Charkhi received three visits from relatives during seven months' detention without trial from March to October 1984. The family of a 28-year-old shop-keeper had no knowledge of his whereabouts throughout his four months' detention without trial from February to June 1985.

8. LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

The provisional constitution of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) is the Fundamental Principles, brought into effect on 21 April 1980. (A commission of 74 members to draft a full constitution was appointed by the Revolutionary Council in February 1986.) Article 30 of the Fundamental Principles prohibits torture:

"Torture, persecution and punishment contrary to human dignity are not permissible."

Torture is punishable under Article 275 of the Penal Code of Afghanistan, by a term of imprisonment of five to 10 years, and is also contrary to Article 3 of the Law on the Implementation of Sentences in Prisons proclaimed in September 1982.

In January 1983 Afghanistan acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Article 7 of the ICCPR provides that "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment". Although the ICCPR provides for States Parties to take measures derogating from certain of their obligations under the Covenant "in time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation and the existence of which is officially proclaimed", Article 7 prohibiting torture is one of the articles from which no derogation may be made under any circumstances.

Afghanistan was among the states which signed the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment when it opened for signature on 4 February 1985. Article 2 of the Convention requires each state party to "take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture". It also provides that "No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture." Speaking to the 41st Session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, the representative of Afghanistan

"said that torture had been used throughout history, and was still practised, by repressive regimes such as those in South Africa, Chile, El Salvador and Guatemala against progressive movements. The world community should abolish the practice; the adoption by the General Assembly, at its previous session, of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment had been a historic step and the culmination of efforts begun with the adoption of Assembly resolution 3452 (XXX), reflecting the Organization's will to take effective world-wide measures to uphold human rights. Pursuant to the new instrument, States would be required to take legislative, administrative, judicial and other measures to prevent the practices in question in areas within their jurisdiction and to punish offenders. But the most important factor in putting an end to such practices would be the willingness of States to respect their international obligations in that regard.

"In the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, one of the Convention's

first signatories, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment were forbidden by law. According to Article 30, paragraph 7 of the country's Fundamental Principles, punishment contrary to human dignity, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, torture and infliction of bodily harm were forbidden. Officials resorting to such practices with a view to extracting statements or confessions were liable, under Article 275 of the Criminal Code, to a prison term ranging from 5 to 10 years."

(Commission on Human Rights, Summary Record of the 41st Meeting, 26 February 1985, UN Doc. E/CN.4/1985/SR.31)

In its General Comment on Article 7 of the ICCPR, the Human Rights Committee has noted:

"that it is not sufficient for the implementation of this article to prohibit such treatment or punishment or to make it a crime. Most States have penal provisions which are applicable to cases of torture or similar practices. Because such cases nevertheless occur, it follows from Article 7, read together with Article 2 of the Covenant, that States must ensure an effective protection through some machinery of control. Complaints about ill-treatment must be investigated effectively by competent authorities. Those found guilty must be held responsible, and the alleged victims must themselves have effective remedies at their disposal, including the right to obtain compensation. Among the safeguards which may make control effective are provisions against detention incommunicado, granting, without prejudice to the investigation, persons such as doctors, lawyers and family members access to the detainees; provisions requiring that detainees should be held in places that are publicly recognized and that their names and places of detention should be entered in a central register available to persons concerned, such as relatives; provisions making confessions or other evidence obtained through torture or other treatment contrary to Article 7 inadmissible in court; and measures of training and instruction of law enforcement officials not to apply such treatment."

In a document prepared in late 1982, the Afghan Government stated that around 200 PDPA members and KHAD employees had been prosecuted and punished since 27 December 1979 on charges of law-breaking, abuse of authority, illegal search and other crimes committed in the course of discharging their duties. It did not state whether these offences were committed under the previous or present government. Amnesty International has received no other information to suggest that officials have been prosecuted for involvement in torture. In July 1985 the initial report of Afghanistan submitted under Article 40 of the ICCPR (UN Doc. CCPR/C/31/Add.1, 7 May 1985) was considered by the Human Rights Committee, the body of experts created by the Covenant to monitor implementation of its provisions. In response to members of the Committee who referred to allegations of torture cited in the February 1985 report of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, the representative of Afghanistan stated that the information in the report was "totally fallacious": he gave no information suggesting that allegations of torture had been investigated or action taken against those responsible. The Convention against Torture requires that there should be a prompt and impartial investigation whenever there is reasonable ground to believe that an act of

torture has been committed (Article 12), that individuals have the right to have their case examined by the competent authorities and that the complainant and witnesses must be protected against consequential ill-treatment or intimidation (Article 13), and that victims should be compensated (Article 14).

In Amnesty International's experience torture or other ill-treatment is most likely to occur during the first hours or days of detention. It is therefore vital that there be prompt and regular access after arrest by a medical officer, by the detainee's family and by a lawyer.

Prolonged incommunicado detention without charge or trial is also in violation of the ICCPR. Article 9 requires that no-one should be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention; anyone arrested should be informed at the time of arrest of the reasons for arrest and any charges against him or her, should be brought promptly before a judge and should be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or release. The Human Rights Committee has stated in its General Comment on Article 9 that delays in bringing a person before a judge "must not exceed a few days", and noted that most states' laws fix precise time limits. Article 9 of the ICCPR also requires that anyone deprived of liberty has the right to take proceedings before a court to challenge the legality of the detention.

In its initial report to the Human Rights Committee, the Afghan Government stated that:

"The law has provided that nobody shall be arrested and detained except by the court and in accordance with the law in force at the time of the commission of a crime. The person who is arrested is informed of the reasons for his arrest and the charges against him. (Article 221 of the Criminal Procedures of the DRA.)

"Duration of detention is fixed by law and cannot be extended without permission of the competent courts. The Criminal Procedure law has embodied a certain provision which states that anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law, to exercise judicial power. The law has provided that the accused shall be tried within a reasonable time."

(Human Rights Committee, Initial Report of Afghanistan dated 2 April 1984, in UN Doc. CCPR/C/31/Add 1, 7 May 1985)

Amnesty International, however, considers that international standards are contravened in Afghanistan by the arbitrary arrest and prolonged incommunicado detention of political prisoners without charge or trial for several months and in some cases longer.

Prolonged incommunicado detention is commonly associated with the torture of prisoners in order to obtain information and confessions. Among the requirements of the Convention against Torture is that no statement made as a result of torture should be invoked as evidence in any proceedings (Article 15). Amnesty International believes that statements made as a result of torture are introduced before special revolutionary courts in Afghanistan.

The ability of prisoners to challenge statements made as a result of torture

is assisted by the rights guaranteed by the ICCPR. These include the right to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, to be presumed innocent, to defend oneself through legal assistance of one's own choosing, to summon and examine witnesses, and to appeal to a higher tribunal against conviction or sentence (Article 14).

In presenting the Afghan Government's report to the Human Rights Committee, the representative of Afghanistan stated as follows:

"The presumption of innocence was stipulated in Article 4 of the Penal Code. That principle of presumption of innocence required that all the measures provided for by law should be taken in order to guarantee an objective, comprehensive and exhaustive examination of all the circumstances of the case and to bring out all the evidence as to the guilt or innocence of the accused as well as all the mitigating or aggravating circumstances. If the charge could not be substantiated, no action was taken against the accused person. If any doubts concerning the guilt could not be dispelled, the accused would always reap the benefit of those doubts.

"Article 30(4) of the Fundamental Principles of the DRA guaranteed the right to defence. First, an accused person had the right to be informed of the grounds of the charge brought against him, and to provide explanations in that connection. He had the right to produce evidence and to formulate applications, as well as the right to appeal against any refusal to grant his applications, or against any other action by a court official. The accused had the right to examine the witnesses against him and to ask questions of witnesses before the court (Article 221 of the Criminal Procedure Law). When the preliminary examination had been completed, the accused had the right to examine his file and to participate personally in the judicial hearings. The accused also had the right of appeal to a higher court (Volume no. 3 of the Criminal Procedure Law).

"Under Article 30(4) of the Fundamental Principles of the DRA, Article 12 of the Act on the Organization, Structure and Jurisdiction of the Courts, and the Criminal Procedure Law, the accused was entitled to defend himself by a legal counsel of his own choosing, (unless he decided to defend himself). In certain cases, the law provided for the possibility of free legal assistance for an accused person who could not afford the services of a lawyer. Thus, the right of an accused person to defence was scrupulously observed and protected by the justice of Afghanistan."

(Human Rights Committee, Summary Record of 603rd Meeting held 10 July 1985, UN Doc. CCPR/C/SR.603, 15 July 1985)

Amnesty International, however, believes that the independence and impartiality of judicial proceedings is seriously compromised in relation to special revolutionary courts in Afghanistan by a number of factors. According to consistent accounts available to Amnesty International, most trials before special revolutionary courts do not take place in public (although proceedings are sometimes televised), legal representation is not available to the defendants, the accused is not able to summon or examine witnesses, and the

right to be presumed innocent is often not respected. There is no appeal to a higher court from a decision of a special revolutionary court. The President of the Special Revolutionary Tribunal is a member of the Revolutionary Council, and judicial officials are subject to directives from the President of the Revolutionary Council. President Babrak Karmal, when receiving officials of KHAD, the Special Revolutionary Prosecutors Department and the Special Revolutionary Court at the Revolutionary Council Headquarters in November 1984, gave "specific instructions" to the Special Revolutionary Court that:

"Acquittal decisions must only be rendered in the event of total and clear innocence of the accused. Instances of determining light punishments for grave crimes must be completely eliminated."

(Kabul radio, 1 November 1984)

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners provide inter alia that accommodation for prisoners should meet all requirements of health, that sanitary installations should be adequate, that chains or irons should not be used as punishment or as restraints, and that prisoners should be able to inform their family immediately of their imprisonment or transfer to another institution and to receive regular family visits. Amnesty International believes that these and other requirements of the Standard Minimum Rules are violated by conditions of detention in KHAD centres and prisons in Afghanistan, and that these in some respects violate the prohibition of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment contained in Article 7 of the ICCPR.

Torture is also punishable under the Criminal Codes of the 15 Soviet Republics that form the USSR. Article 108 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) prescribes imprisonment of five to 12 years for intentional infliction of grave bodily injury when it assumes the character of torment or torture; Article 109 prescribes imprisonment of up to five years for intentional infliction of less grave bodily injury when it assumes the character of torment or torture; and Article 113 prescribes imprisonment of up to three years for systematic infliction of beatings or other actions which assume the character of torture but do not result in bodily injury defined under the preceding provisions. Under Article 179 "the compelling to give testimony by means of application of threats or other illegal actions on the part of a person conducting an inquiry or preliminary investigation" is punishable by up to three years' imprisonment, and the same actions combined with the application of force or with humiliation of the person interrogated by three to 10 years.

The USSR is a party to the ICCPR and has signed the Convention against Torture. Article 5(1) of the Convention against Torture extends the obligation of a state party not only to offences committed in territory under its jurisdiction but also to offences when the alleged offender is a national of that state.

Article 4 of the Convention Against Torture, which requires each state party to ensure that all acts of torture are offences under its criminal law, specifies that this should apply also "to an act by any person which constitutes complicity or participation in torture" (emphasis added). Article 5 of the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 17 December 1979, requires that "no law enforcement official may inflict,

instigate or tolerate any act of torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" (emphasis added). Amnesty International therefore believes that, in addition to some evidence that Soviet personnel may sometimes have directly inflicted torture on prisoners in Afghanistan, their presence when it is inflicted by others constitutes complicity in or toleration of torture, which is in contravention of international human rights standards.

9. CONCLUSION

Armed conflict has been taking place in Afghanistan throughout the period covered by this report. Amnesty International does not identify itself with any of the parties to a particular conflict. As a matter of principle, it condemns the torture or execution of prisoners by anyone, including opposition groups. When crimes are committed by opposition groups, Amnesty International considers that it is within the jurisdiction of governments to determine criminal responsibility and to bring those responsible to justice. The exercise of such authority by states must, however, conform to their commitments under international law.

The prohibition of torture under international law is absolute. The Afghan Government has, during the period of this conflict, acceded to the ICCPR, under which torture remains prohibited even "in time of public emergency which threatens the life of the nation", and signed the Convention against Torture, under which "no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture". The USSR, whose personnel are reported to be involved in torture in Afghanistan, is bound by the ICCPR, which it has ratified, and has also signed the Convention against Torture.

In April 1984, Amnesty International published a 12-point program of practical measures for the prevention of torture. The Fundamental Principles of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan explicitly prohibit torture. However, in view of the consistent and recurrent reports of torture in Afghanistan, Amnesty International believes that the Afghan Government should implement the 12-point program in order to stop torture and give effect to its stated adherence to human rights. The following points are especially relevant:

- 1) The highest authorities in Afghanistan should issue clear public instructions to all officials involved in the custody, interrogation or treatment of prisoners that torture will not be tolerated under any circumstances.
- 2) The government should ensure that relatives, lawyers and doctors have prompt and regular access to all detainees, and that all detainees are brought before a judicial authority promptly after being taken into custody.
- 3) Relatives and lawyers should be informed promptly of the whereabouts of detainees. No-one should be held in secret or unacknowledged detention.
- 4) All places of detention, including KHAD centres and military detention centres, should be open to regular independent inspection by an international humanitarian body with the appropriate expertise.
- 5) The Afghan Government should establish an impartial body to investigate all complaints and reports of torture. Its methods and findings should be made public. In particular, Amnesty International believes there is an urgent need for an independent investigation into allegations of

torture in KHAD centres. Complainants and witnesses to such an investigation should be protected from intimidation.

- 6) Steps should be taken to ensure that confessions or other evidence obtained through torture may never be invoked in legal proceedings.
- 7) In every case where it is proved that an act of torture has been committed by or at the instigation of a public official, criminal proceedings should be instituted against the alleged offender.
- 8) It should be made clear during the training of all officials involved in the custody, interrogation or treatment of prisoners, as well as members of the armed forces, that torture is a criminal act. They should be instructed that they are obliged to refuse to obey any order to torture. The UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners should be widely disseminated.
- 9) Victims of torture and their dependants should be afforded financial compensation and provided with appropriate medical care or rehabilitation.

In view of the presence of Soviet personnel in Afghanistan and reports of their involvement in torture, Amnesty International believes that the following points are also relevant to the Government of the USSR in relation to its role in Afghanistan:

- 1) The Government of the USSR should issue clear public instructions to all officials, including members of its armed forces, involved in the custody, interrogation or treatment of prisoners that torture will not be tolerated in any circumstances.
- 2) The Government of the USSR should make public what steps it has taken to investigate the persistent allegations that Soviet personnel are involved in torture, and the methods and findings of such investigations. Failure to subject such allegations to careful, public scrutiny strengthens concern that the allegations are true and facilitates the continuation of such activities as have occurred.
- 3) In particular, the Government of the USSR should indicate what, if any, prosecutions have occurred of military personnel for ill-treatment of prisoners, and what steps have been taken by the USSR Procuracy (Prokuratura), which, according to Article 169 of the Constitution of the USSR, has the power to supervise the legality of the activities of all branches of the Government of the USSR including the activities of the military, through the Chief Military Procuracy established within it.
- 4) If these established mechanisms for identifying and remedying alleged abuses by Soviet personnel have not been effective, the Government of the USSR should establish an impartial body to investigate the allegations, and its methods and findings should be made public.
- 5) In every case where it is proved that an act of torture has been

committed by or at the instigation of a Soviet official, or that a Soviet official is implicated in or has tolerated an act of torture, criminal proceedings should be instigated against the alleged offender.

- 6) The Government of the USSR should ensure that it is made clear during the training of its officials involved in the custody, interrogation or treatment of prisoners, as well as members of its armed forces, and during the training of any such Afghan officials and military personnel for which it is responsible, that torture is a criminal act. They should be instructed that they are obliged to refuse to obey any order to torture.
- 7) Where Soviet personnel are found to have been involved in torture, the Government of the USSR should recognize its responsibility to ensure that financial compensation is afforded and appropriate medical care or rehabilitation provided.
- 8) The Government of the USSR should use all available channels to intercede with the Government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan to ensure that reports of torture are investigated and that effective action is taken against torture. It should ensure that military, security or police transfers or training do not facilitate the practice of torture.
- 9) The Government of the USSR should facilitate access by an international humanitarian body to prisoners in whose interrogation or custody Soviet personnel are involved.

APPENDIX

TESTIMONIES OF TORTURE BY FORMER PRISONERS

The testimonies reproduced below were all given to Amnesty International representatives who interviewed the former prisoners in the countries in which they are now refugees. The informants have asked Amnesty International not to make their names public, as they fear reprisals against members of their families still in Afghanistan.

Case No. 1

A merchant in Kabul and a former member of the National Assembly under President Daud, previously imprisoned for three months in 1979 under President Taraki, he was arrested in November 1980. The following account was given to Amnesty International in the country in which he is now a refugee in September 1983.

"At the time of my arrest, which occurred at about 9.30 at night, I was treated with some respect by the four officers who had come to my house. All were in plain clothes, but introduced themselves as KHAD officers and said that they wished to discuss with me my recent movements. However, when we arrived at the Ministry of the Interior their behaviour soon changed. I was taken to my cell where there were two other prisoners; a building worker from Kalahan, north of Kabul and a civil servant from Nangarhar province, who worked in the Ministry of Agriculture. The building worker had clearly been badly beaten. His clothes were covered in blood and his face and arms severely bruised. After I had been in the cell two or three hours, I was brought out for interrogation. I was told that the KHAD had information that I had visited Mazar-e Sharif and Kandahar in recent weeks and that my purpose in so doing was to sow discontent against the government. Whilst my political sympathies are certainly opposed to the Babrak Karmal government, it was completely untrue that I had visited these cities. Indeed I had not been outside Kabul for more than six months. I protested my innocence against the accusations, but as soon as I did so the beatings started.

"Four or five men beat and kicked me all over my body. I soon fell to the floor, but every time I did so I was dragged again to my feet and beaten again. In between the beatings I was asked more questions regarding my movements and my acquaintances. During the beatings one Soviet was also present in the room. After half an hour of this questioning and beating my toes were connected to wires from a crank telephone. I was then administered electric shocks. The pain was severe and far worse than the beatings. This continued for an indeterminate time, interspersed only with further questioning and denunciation of me for being bourgeois or for representing feudal interests. At a certain point, I cannot recall precisely when, I simply fell unconscious. The next thing that I recall was waking the following day. A soldier was wiping my brow with a wet flannel. I remember feeling intense pain and soreness all over my body. I was also suddenly aware that my left hand was broken. This had occurred at some point during the interrogation when one of the KHAD officers had stamped on my hand. Following this, I was never interrogated again. Two days later one of the KHAD officers who had participated in my interrogation came to my cell and told me that I would be released. He said the KHAD were now

satisfied that my detention had been a mistake and that they accepted my statement that I had not left Kabul in recent months.

"Several days after my release I was visited by several senior officials, including Dr Najib, the Head of KHAD. They apologized for my detention and my torture and said this had occurred as a result of incorrect information given to the authorities."

Case No. 2

A woman now aged about 26, she was a secondary school teacher in Kabul at the time of her arrest in January 1981 and was a member of a party involved in armed opposition to the government. She was detained for 10 months and released in November 1981. The following account was given to Amnesty International in the country in which she is now a refugee in May 1985.

"My sister and I went to the secret office of [an opposition party] ... I stood a little bit outside the building and my sister went inside. But she never returned.

"I became worried, and after 15 minutes I went down to the bazaar. There KHAD arrested me. I was taken to Shashdarak KHAD, where I was for 24 hours. I was interrogated: they wanted me to sign a confession on my party membership, but I didn't.

"That night a woman and a man came to my room. They were Afghans. They said my sister was ill, so I was taken to her. She was unconscious and I saw they had beaten her. She had bruises and redness on her face and on her arms. I touched her arm and she regained consciousness, but I was not allowed to talk with her.

"I was imprisoned first in Sedarat for one-and-a-half months, then in Pul-e Charkhi for five months, then back in Sedarat for three-and-a-half months.

"The first time in Sedarat I lived alone in a cell filled with puddles of water. It came trickling from the ceiling; no part of the floor was dry. I did not have a mattress. And each night KHAD took me for interrogation: I wasn't allowed to sleep.

"For 24 hours they forced me to stand on one leg in the middle of the room. Every second hour the guards changed. I fell down with exhaustion, and they forced me to stand up again. Finally I lost consciousness.

"Three times I was given electric shocks with a stick. They put the sticks at my shoulder and on my shoulder blades, maybe for five or 10 minutes until I fainted away. Many times they hit me.

"One man was tortured in front of my eyes. For two hours they hit him with firewood and scratched his body so that the skin came off. They hit him with an electric stick on his shoulders and on his calves. The man lost consciousness and was dragged out from the room. Then I fainted away.

"The worst torture for me was when I saw [name given]'s dead body. It was

the second time I was in Sedarat. He had been shot in the head. His arms and legs were bloody. I fainted away.

"We were brought to Pul-e Charkhi when Sedarat became overcrowded. I and my sister were put together in one of the small underground cells. The cell was not bigger than one or one-and-a-half metres high. We were only able to sit or lie down. There was a flush toilet, but not any water. Every day a soldier came with a bucket of water, which we used for the toilet. There was also a small window, but very little light came in from there and I destroyed my eyes, so now I have to use glasses."

Case No. 3

A 25-year-old student, he was studying at the faculty of economics at the University of Kabul at the time of his arrest in March 1981. The following account was given to Amnesty International in the country in which he is now a refugee in May 1985.

"I was arrested by KHAD agents and they started immediately asking me why I had come to Jalalabad. They thought that I was planning to escape to Pakistan. I was kept in the KHAD centre in Jalalabad for 50 days in a small cell three by five metres, and most of the time there were 16 prisoners in this cell.

"After three days the interrogation started and I was beaten with sticks, and once they tied me to a tree in the courtyard while beating me. In the beginning of the interrogation period I was taken to a room where other prisoners were tortured with electricity just to frighten me to confess all kind of crimes. At one time I was made to watch a prisoner being tortured: they pulled out a fingernail from this prisoner. Once we were forced to stand in the sun for almost five hours and many of the prisoners fainted. I was also forced to do exercises with a heavy metal sheet on my back and when I couldn't straighten my legs the torturers pulled my ears.

"Sometimes prisoners who had been severely tortured were taken out of the cell and afterwards the soldiers told us that these prisoners had been executed.

"After 50 days in the KHAD centre I was transferred to the central jail in Jalalabad and there I saw 25 prisoners in heavy fetters. They were accused of trying to escape and were put in an isolation cell for 45 days. They were not allowed to leave the cell during this time and the food was given to them through a small hole in the door. Afterwards when these prisoners were taken out of the cell I could see that the cell was not bigger than maybe six by six metres. Once the 25 prisoners were put in a water tank in the courtyard of the prison where they had to stand from 9 pm to 5 pm the next day. This happened in winter and it was cold weather during this time of the year. We could see the water tank which was in the courtyard not far from the jail office.

"A friend of mine, [name given], who now lives in Kabul, was tied to a table and beaten, and when I saw him after the torture he was sitting sideways on a chair, half lying, because his back was full of wounds from the beating.

"Very often we were threatened with execution. The guards came to our cell and just told us: 'Tomorrow it's your turn'.

"The sanitary conditions were very bad. We were about 1,000 prisoners who had to share three toilets, which meant that there was always a long line to all the three toilets.

"My interrogator was an Afghan but very often he was joined by an interpreter and a Soviet who also sat by the table. I was never tortured by Soviets but I saw many times Soviets in rooms where torture was taking place. But I don't know if the Soviets participated in the torture or if they gave orders for torture."

Case No. 4

A 38-year-old woman from Kunduz, married and the mother of seven children, she was working as a primary school teacher in Kabul at the time of her arrest in January 1982. She was imprisoned for nine months and released without having been charged or tried. The following account was given to Amnesty International in the country in which she is now a refugee in May 1985.

"Five KHAD men and two women came at around 11 am. I was taken to Shashdarak where for the first hours I had to fill in a form with a lot of questions about my background and family. After that I was pushed into a room with some inches of water on the floor. Sometimes I had to sit in the water to get some rest.

"Then I was taken to another room. There was only one chair--an electric chair. They started to interrogate me. They asked me if I knew different people. They asked me if I knew A.B. and C.D. I said no. Then A.B. and C.D. were brought into the room and paraded in front of me: they were two mujahidin commanders and had been arrested the same day as I. Then C.D. said "I know this woman: she is a teacher and works for [an opposition party]. C.D. had been ill-treated: he had marks on his face and on his hands. I denied it and said he was telling a lie. The interrogation continued; a Soviet was asking the questions. I said that the Soviet did not have any right to question an Afghan in Afghanistan. This angered them and they tied my hands and burned my lips with a cigarette. It was an Afghan who did this. He said 'you must answer the Soviet's questions'. I refused. The Soviet gave instructions to the KHAD men and went out of the room. Afterwards they hit me with an electric stick until I fell down to the floor and lost consciousness. It was a small stick with a rubber handle. They used to have these in riots. There is a battery inside the handle.

"The interrogation continued from morning time to 4 pm, then again from 11 pm until 4 am.

"Early next morning I was brought outside to a courtyard. It was in the middle of winter and there was one metre of snow. My hands were tied behind my back. I was placed standing in the middle of the enclosed courtyard and then they covered me with snow up to my neck. I had to stand in the courtyard until 2 pm.

"I was interrogated for seven nights, and they gave me torture each time I was interrogated. Several times I was put in an electric chair. I saw the

electric wires which connected the chair to the electric system in the room. And I saw the Afghans press the button before I got the shocks. The Soviets were often present in the room while this torture was taking place, but the KHAD people turned on the switch. I was also subjected to the telephone torture. They pressed needles in my fingers, needles from the wires leading to the telephone. They also tied my hair to the ceiling and hit my feet with an electric stick.

"After seven days in Shashdarak I was taken to Sedarat. There the torture was much lighter and less often. I was burned with cigarettes and hit with electric sticks and thick wires. I lived in an underground cell for three months, then I was put in an ordinary cell.

"After six months I got heart problems so they stopped giving me electric shocks. I was released suddenly and they forced me to sign a paper.

"When I was arrested my husband was out of Kabul and when he returned the children told him that I had been arrested. He went immediately to the KHAD headquarters to ask about me but got the answer that the KHAD did not know anything about me. After 15 days he was able to trace me and leave some clothes for me but during the time I was in Shashdarak and Sedarat I was never allowed to meet him or other relatives."

Case No. 5

A building contractor from Pagman, he was arrested in early 1983 and released in October 1984. The following account was given to Amnesty International in the country in which he is now a refugee in May 1985.

"I was arrested in the middle of the night when some KHAD agents knocked on the door. They said I was a guerrilla and member of a fundamentalist party. They brought me to Pul-e Charkhi prison where I had to stay for 25 days because the KHAD had arrested so many people that they couldn't bring me to Sedarat: the investigation centre was already full of detainees.

"From the prison they took me to Shashdarak, the KHAD headquarters. I was forced to stand for six days and nights with my hands stretched above my head. As soon as I dropped my hands out of exhaustion they started beating me.

"At one time they forced me to eat a lot of food and then I had to squat with my hands under my knees. This went on until I vomited, and then I was forced to eat more food. And then they hit and kicked me. After this torture I was brought to another room where they gave me electric shocks with wires from a square-shaped box.

"I was altogether 23 days in Shashdarak and I was tortured every day in one way or another. Once we were all threatened to get a bottle in our rectums. This seemed so humiliating that most of the threatened confessed whatever the torturers asked for but I didn't ...

"From Shashdarak I was transferred to Sedarat, and there I was detained for 10 months and during that time I was tortured many times. There I also experienced a new method when they kept me for long periods in a small cell

where you could neither stand nor lie down. Another method was to force us to stand bending over a table or against a wall and then as soon as we tried to support ourselves with our hands they started beating us. I knew that it was dangerous to confess anything and I knew that 12 people who were in Sedarat at the same time with me were sentenced to death after confessing. I never confessed anything and suddenly I was just released without any explanation."

Case No. 6

A man aged 23, he was a student in Kandahar at the time of his arrest in April 1983. He was apparently suspected of involvement with armed opposition groups. The following account was given to Amnesty International in the country in which he is now a refugee in June 1985.

"I was arrested in April 1983 and released in December the same year, and spent altogether eight months and 20 days in detention centres and Kandahar jail.

"I was arrested by a unit of Afghan soldiers and detained for two days in a military detention centre. The second day in this centre I got electric shocks with the 'telephone'. They tied wires to my toes and before they started moving the handle they poured water on me.

"From the military detention centre I was transferred to the KHAD investigation centre Darwazan (Herat Gate), and for two days I was left in a cell. Nobody bothered me. Then after two days I was taken to a room with a machine that looked like a computer screen. There were two small lamps on this machine, one yellow and one red, and from the machine a wire to a small device which looked like a microphone.

"When they pressed this microphone on my body I got strong electric shocks. This room with the machine was on the first floor and all of my 16 cell mates were taken to this room and got the same torture. Many of them fainted after the torture and when they were brought back to the cell they were dizzy and felt sick.

"I got these electric shocks on my penis and sometimes I still bleed when urinating. I was three months in the KHAD centre and I was tortured with this machine eight or nine times. After the torture we were so weak that the soldiers had to drag us back to our cell.

"There were more than 10 people in the torture room and one of them was a Soviet officer. Everyone knew that he was a Soviet and it seemed that he was in charge of the investigation. This Soviet was in the room with the computer screen many times when I was tortured, at least on three or four occasions. But he never participated in the torture himself.

"After three months with the KHAD I confessed that I had contacts with the resistance. I did not but I said it because they tortured me. I also said to the judge in the revolutionary court that I had confessed because of torture but he sentenced me to eight months in prison. I was labelled an ashrar (bandit). They also threatened me with very severe punishment if I was ever arrested again accused of anti-government activities.

"I had planned to marry this girl but now it is difficult because I cannot sleep with the girl. They tortured me too much."

Case No. 7

A man now aged 20, he was a student in Kabul when he was arrested in December 1983. The following account was given to Amnesty International in the country in which he is now a refugee in May 1985.

"One day when I went to the cinema where I had a part-time job a friend of mine told me that some people had been looking for me the previous evening after I had left the cinema. I understood from my friend's story that the police were looking for me so I warned my parents. I also told them not to worry because I had not done anything illegal.

"The police came the next day. They were polite and checked my identity card, and I had to go with them to the police station. They called someone and said that 'we have the man we have been looking for'.

"In the police station, when I was watching television together with some policemen, an officer came and said that he wanted to take a walk with me. When we went outside the police station I was forced into a jeep. I was pressed against the floor in the jeep so I wouldn't know where I was taken. After the drive I was taken to a cell underground somewhere with only a grated window in the ceiling.

"From this cell I was taken to an investigation room. They tied my hands behind my back and began beating me with their fists. I fell on the floor and they even kicked me in the face and I lost eight teeth. All the time they were asking about people whose names I didn't recognize. For three days I was tortured like this, and after that my mouth was so bloody and swollen that I couldn't eat.

"I was again taken to the investigation room and then they showed me the equipment for electrical torture and I had a mental collapse. I cried. I could not take more torture and I said to my torturers I would sign anything they wanted. They then started asking questions and answered the questions themselves, and I wrote them down on paper though I didn't have the faintest idea what it was all about.

"Early next morning I was brought again to the investigation room and at 10 a doctor came and cleaned my mouth. I was transferred to another cell where I stayed for nine days. And then a KHAD agent came to my cell and said: 'We have made a mistake. We were looking for another man with the same name.' I was brought to the investigation room where I had to sign a paper promising not to engage in anti-government activities and in which I also promised not to tell about the torture. And he tore my file to pieces. I was blindfolded and led out of the building. At the main gate they left me standing, and then I realized I had been kept in Shashdarak."

Case No. 8

Now aged 19, he was a 16-year-old Kabul school student at the time of his arrest in December 1983. He was sentenced to five years' imprisonment but released from prison after 18 months detention in June 1985 and sent for military service. The following account was given to Amnesty International in the country in which he is now a refugee in July 1986.

"Three people came to the school and said they wanted to talk to me for a few minutes. I asked them first who they were, because I thought they would be teachers from the school. They said they wanted to talk to me outside. They put me in a car outside the school and said they were taking me for some questioning and then they would take me to my house.

"They took me to Shashdarak, to a room where there were three people sitting. They first asked friendly questions. Then they said they had received reports that I was a member and active in [an opposition party]. And also that I was involved in the bomb explosion which occurred in the second party zone of Kabul city. I told them they were wrong.

"Someone called [name given] came and slapped me on the face several times and threatened me, saying that if I did not give them the answers they wanted they would use other methods. I told them that there was no truth in their accusations. They continued beating and kicking me. They broke my nose. The very first day, I think I lost consciousness because of that. When I came to I was in a basement, in a room where there were at first 12, and later on 20, people detained.

"I was kept there for two weeks. During that period they took me five times for interrogations. They really tortured me very hard. Mostly it was beating with wire cables. They also burned me with cigarettes. They used to hold my hair and bang my head against the wall. They used to put my hands on the edge of the table and cane me with wooden sticks. Because of that I have problems with this finger. I can bend it but it really hurts. And my back: they kicked it so hard that I still have a bad back.

"After about two weeks they took me to Sedarat. I was in a room about four metres by three metres, with 25 people. Torture in Sedarat was harder than in Shashdarak. I was not taken for interrogation the first day. The second day when they took me there was a man who had a very big body. He asked me in a friendly manner to give him the details of the people I knew. He said he would then let me go. I told him that the report he had received was not right, that they were probably looking for someone else.

"He started to beat me. I fell down. He beat me with his fists and kicked me. I thought my backbone might have been broken, because during the month I was kept in Sedarat, I could not sit down or get up. I had torn my jumper and wrapped it round my back.

"Whenever they took me for interrogation they tried to inflict even more pain on my back as they knew it hurt. They held me in their arms and pressed me, or they would punch me in the back. Sometimes the pain was so much that I lost consciousness.

"A week later they took me for another interrogation. I did not say any more than I had said before. They gave me an injection. I was trying to stop them, but three people came and they injected me. I felt severe pain. My back was killing me. I felt my heart was being pulled out. I could not see anything in front of me - only silhouettes. I fell down. When I came to I did not know how long I had been unconscious.

"At about lunch time they took me again. They said: 'Tell us who your contact is'. I denied all of that again. They began to kick me. My nose had just got better. They hurt my nose again. I lost consciousness. I remember I was bleeding and my torturer's hands were also covered in blood when he was beating me.

"After three weeks they took me out of the room again. It had snowed. I had to stand in the snow for about three to four hours. Even when I was released the skin on my feet was peeling off.

"One day when they took me to be tortured again a doctor came who had a stethoscope hung around his neck. He took my pulse. He saw my feet but said I was not so unhealthy. Then they injected me again. The second time they injected me was worse than the first time. I lost consciousness. My heart was aching. The left side of my foot had no feeling.

"The day after the second injection they took me to a room which was small and there was nothing else in there. They attached some wire which was coming from a machine to my hands. They asked the same questions and I gave the same answers. The electric current was very strong. I lost consciousness. They poured water on me. This time they attached the wire to my toes, and turned the switch on and off. I jumped up and fell down each time they did that. I lost consciousness again.

"I remained in Sedarat for about four weeks. Then they took us to Pul-e Charkhi, third block. They tortured people in Pul-e Charkhi too. One month after I had been in Pul-e Charkhi they took me for interrogation. I was in the same room as [name given], a boy who had been transferred with me. He was being interrogated too. I saw that he died in front of me when they hit his head against the wall. They held his hair and banged his head against the wall. I saw him die in front of me.

"They told me I would be facing the same fate if I did not tell them what they were looking for. And they began to beat me with their fists.

"Then they brought me to Sedarat, to take me to court. Because I had not confessed to anything and because they had nothing against me they sentenced me to five years' imprisonment. I was released in June 1985, but that meant going to the army centre.

"I was in Shashdarak for two weeks, in Sedarat for one month, and in Pul-e Charkhi for sixteen and a half months."

Case No. 9

A man now aged 42, he was a secondary school teacher in a Kabul suburb when he was arrested in March 1984. He was detained for seven months and released in October 1984. During and after his detention he developed a severe stomach ulcer which required an operation. The following account was given to Amnesty International in the country in which he is now a refugee in September 1986.

"I had friendly relations with the mujahedin but was never involved in any of their violent activities. I was a sort of postman for their secret letters. The school principal informed the government about my sympathies.

"A jeep with four KHAD men came to the school and took me to Shashdarak. I was taken to a room where three investigators asked me questions about my connections with the mujahedin. I said I was friendly with the people of my locality and there was nothing wrong with that.

"Then they started slapping, kicking and beating me all over my body. They interrogated me for two or three hours every day. Every time I was interrogated, I was given a beating. After five days of this, I was sent to Sedarat.

"I was not beaten or tortured at Sedarat. But to make me talk, I was forced to see others being tortured. I saw people being pushed into an electric chair, screaming and losing consciousness. I saw a man being pushed towards a door. His penis and testicles were crushed between the door and the door-frame. I was terrified. But I stuck to my story that I had done nothing wrong in being friendly with the people of my locality.

"After three days at Sedarat, they sent me back to Shashdarak for 10 days and then to Pul-e Charkhi prison where I was detained with 15 other prisoners in a room on the first floor of Block II.

"The worst thing at Pul-e Charkhi were the long queues for the few, filthy toilets. People waiting in the queues often could not control themselves and did their toilet while standing.

"We slept on the floor. Each of us was given one torn blanket which was meant to serve as both mattress and covering. The food was boiled brinjal, green lentil and parched gram. There was no medical care at Pul-e Charkhi but serious cases were taken to a government hospital.

"My relatives managed to see me three times while I was at Pul-e Charkhi. They were allowed to see me only after submitting several applications at government offices. I received food and clothing during their visits.

"I never saw any Soviets at Pul-e Charkhi. At Shashdarak and Sedarat, I saw Afghans of KHAD giving documents to some Soviets and seeking orders from those Soviets.

"One day, a soldier with a slip of paper came to my room at Pul-e Charkhi and called my name. I was taken to the prison office and then driven in a jeep to the centre of Kabul. I was released in front of a cinema and told to go home. I was warned to keep my mouth shut about my detention.

"I was never brought before any judge or court during the seven months I was detained. I don't know why they kept me for seven months and then why they released me. They have no logic.

"The doctors here [in the country of refuge] have told me that my stomach problem was caused by the psychological upsets I had suffered during my detention."

Case No. 10

Now aged 20, he was arrested twice while a student at Kabul University, in August 1984 and July or August 1985. The following account was given to Amnesty International in the country in which he is now a refugee in September 1986.

"I was studying at Kabul University in August 1984 when there was an explosion in the faculty of which I was a student and a Soviet adviser was wounded. Twenty male students were arrested. They took us straight to Shashdarak.

"My interrogation started on the second day, at 6am. I was taken to a room with two chairs and a small table. There were two interrogators. They put this 'black bag' over my head and pumped it up, preventing me from breathing. It was made of rubber inside, and thick material outside, with a valve on top. I was suffocated inside this three times. Each time it lasted one or two minutes. I didn't completely lose consciousness. I had heard about the 'black bag' before: one of my friends had had it used on him. They said that if I did not give information about the person who planted the bomb I would be expelled from the university.

"The next day I was taken to a different room. There was a battery and they attached two wires to my ears. I couldn't see how they turned the current on. It wasn't very strong at first, but they increased it. My whole body vibrated: I went dizzy and felt sick, but didn't lose consciousness.

"I had been kept in a room with 60 people, but around the fourth day I was put in a single cell, which stank, and kept there for 24 hours.

"After one week, I was taken to another torture room and they began to ask me questions again. They beat me with fists - there were three people, one watching and two beating. I lost consciousness. They took me to stand under a cold shower for 10 minutes.

"Ten days after my arrest I was sent to Sedarat. I wasn't tortured further in Sedarat: I was well-treated and told I would be freed. After five days in Sedarat I was released, and was told not to tell anyone what had happened to me.

"The second time I was arrested was in July or August 1985. A KHAD agent asked me to cooperate with the government, informing them who was talking against the government and who had contacts with the Mujahedin. I made excuses - I said I didn't have enough time because of my work, that my house was in an area where the Mujahedin often attacked.

"Then I was told to come to the faculty office where a KHAD agent came every week or two. I was taken to Shashdarak, and told the KHAD had been studying my behaviour and that I had contacts with the mujaahedin.

"After three days I was taken to a small room. Two Afghans were sitting there. A Soviet adviser came and talked to them and left the room. There was a machine mounted inside the wall. It looked rather like a typewriter. You put your hands inside the machine up to the wrist and were given electric shocks. They tortured me with this three times that day, for about 15 or 20 minutes each time.

"After about a week, I was interrogated again. This time I was slapped. But I still said I couldn't cooperate.

"After a month, I was questioned again and required to fill in a questionnaire. It included a question on future cooperation. I was forced to sign it. A photographer came but he didn't take my photograph - they had one already and attached it to the form. Then I was taken in a car to the university.

"I talked to another person [name given] in Shashdarak who had been there for about five months. He was from Panjsher and had been stopped on the bus carrying food supplies and medicine. He said he was taking them for his family. His family didn't know where he was. He had been tortured very badly. His face was very pale and he was very thin - you would think he had been in prison for years not months. When he showed me his back I could see he had been beaten with sticks and burned with cigarettes. He didn't know what was waiting for him in the future."

Case No. 11

Now aged 26, he is a science graduate. He was arrested in October 1984 and detained without trial for three months. The following account was given to Amnesty International in the country in which he is now a refugee in July 1986.

"I was arrested in October 1984, when I was trying to go to Pakistan. Someone had reported it. I was with my father and a friend. We had started our journey at about 3.30 am when it was quite dark. We did not know someone was following us. A car turned in front of us with its lights switched off. There were about five people in the car: they were carrying Kalashnikov guns. They arrested all three of us.

"They put us in the same car and took us to the KHAD centre named Wazir Akbar Khan, which is also known as KHAD-e Atrafi [surburban KHAD]. It is called Atrafi because it is used only for those people who are arrested in the suburbs of Kabul.

"They took us to a yard and made us stand with our backs to each other so that we could not see each other's faces. The weather was very cold and an armed soldier was standing in the middle of the yard. We were not allowed to talk.

"They began to take us to the interrogation room. First they took my

friend. Then after about three hours they took my father in. Then after about three hours they took me into the interrogation room.

"It was a room of about three by three metres. There were all kinds of torture instruments hung on the walls. There were four people in the room. First they began to show me the torture instruments. These were wire cables, wooden sticks and rubber lashes. They showed me their guns and threatened to torture me unless I 'confessed'. A KHAD official pointed his gun to my ear and said: 'If you do not tell us, I will fire.' I said: 'What do you want me to say'? He said: 'According to our reports you have been a member of [an armed opposition group] since 1979 and you have been involved in the assassination of members of the PDPA. We know that you have been to Pakistan to help the mujaahedin."

"I denied all these allegations. They tried to get me to talk, but as I did not say anything they began to slap me very hard on the face, and to beat me with the lash and with the wooden sticks.

"At about midnight they took me from KHAD-e Atrafi to Shashdarak. When I got there, without even asking me a question, they began to beat and kick me, so much that my nose began to bleed. They then sent me to a yard where I had to stand on one foot all the time. The weather was very cold and they forced me to take everything off except for a shirt and my trousers. And this was not a torture peculiar only to younger people. I saw old men with white beards who had to stand there on one foot. We could not sit down because there were people who would beat and hit us with lashes and wooden sticks, slapping and kicking and so on. There could be as many as 60 detainees standing in this yard.

"Then they took me to the torture room and my interrogation started. They said they would let me go if I confessed and told them about my contacts. I said I didn't have any contacts and denied all their accusations.

"At this point someone grabbed my hair and started to pull. They laid me on the floor and a very big and fat man trod on my stomach. They also put my hand on the wall and hit it with a wooden stick.

"Another torture was electric shock. They had special rooms for this. They had a special machine for giving electric shocks. They connected this machine to my finger tips, my toes, my tongue and my genitals. I know people who have been permanently injured in this way.

"After a week they took me to a room which was in the basement of the same building. This room was out of the reach of the sun. There was a very bright headlight in the room. It was extremely bright and no one could turn it off. This light could actually turn you blind. This happened to one of the inmates [name given].

"This room was very small. There were five of us in the room. There were two bunk beds for four people and the fifth had to sleep on the floor. We had no access to doctor or medicine. Even people with severe pains did not have access to medicine.

"We were allowed to go to the toilet only once a day, and that was only for three to four minutes. There was no room for getting washed. We had to wear

dirty clothes all the time. No matter how desperate we were, we could not ask to go to the toilet until the next day, because we could always remember what happened to [name given]. He was in our room. One day he had stomach ache. He kept asking to go to the toilet. After some time the KHAD agent came: it was the same big fat man. He took him away. After about two hours they brought him back. He was seriously ill. He said they had trodden on his stomach.

"In all the interrogations, Soviet officers were present. I could identify them from their faces and from their language. They all spoke in Russian, not Dari. They usually act as advisers. They draft questions. In my own interrogation they drafted questions and dictated them in Russian to the KHAD agents who would then ask the questions. The act of torture is done by the KHAD agents. Soviets were present but they only gave orders and did not take part in the actual torture themselves.

"About three months after my arrest, in January 1985, I was released. They said: 'You have denied everything you have done, but remember, if you are brought here once more you will face no other punishment but execution.' They had arranged for me to work as a teacher in a remote village."

Case No. 12

A man now aged 28, he owned a shop jointly with his father and brother in the centre of Kabul. He was arrested in February 1985 and released after four months in June 1985. The following account was given to Amnesty International in the country in which he is now a refugee in September 1986.

"I had just opened my shop in the morning. A night letter [opposition leaflet] was lying in the road in front of my shop. I picked it up and started reading it. As soon as I started reading the night letter, a plainclothes officer from the KHAD turned up, showed me his card and ordered me to come with him. No relative or friend was around when I was taken away.

"I was taken in a Neva [Soviet car] to Shashdarak. Within five minutes of my arrival, they started questioning me. 'Which party do you belong to? What are your activities?' I was afraid and defensive. I said I didn't know who had thrown the night letter in front of my shop.

"After another five or ten minutes, they started abusing me and beating me. Two men took turns to beat me for some hours on the first day. They hit me, punched me, kicked me for an hour or two every day during my first week of detention.

"Then they left me alone in my detention room for a week as they seemed to be busy in official meetings. The following week they were very friendly and nice to me. Good food was given to me and I was advised to tell them the facts.

"As I had nothing to add to how I had picked up the night letter, they started beating me again after my third week of detention. For about 45 minutes or an hour every day or otherwise at night, the beatings continued for two-and-a-half months.

"During those months, they also used an electric rod on me five or six

times. They used to place it against my chin, my belly or in my armpits. Twice or three times I lapsed into semi-consciousness while being tortured. When they were drunk they were specially rough with me. My interrogators were always in plain clothes. So I could not make out their rank.

"I was not beaten during the last month or so of my detention. After the scars from my beatings had healed, they released me. They warned me to say nothing about what had happened, took me to the centre of Kabul and let me go.

"My family never knew where I was for four months. From the day I was arrested to the day I was released, no friend or relative saw me or heard of me. Some people who worked for the KHAD as drivers or in other such service positions took money from my father and promised to let him know where I was. But none of them told my father where I was during those four months.

"I was kept in solitary confinement throughout my detention. I was let out of my detention room only for interrogation and for a daily bath and toilet.

"My detention room was in a newly constructed building and was quite big, about eight metres by eight metres. It contained a rough bed and some dirty bedclothes. I was given food three times a day. Tea and bread for breakfast. Potatoes, beans and rice for the other two daily meals.

"I was never brought before any judicial authority during my four months of detention."

Case No. 13

A man now aged 25, he was a merchant in Kabul at the time of his arrest in June 1985. His father and several brothers had been active in a party involved in opposition to PDPA governments: his father disappeared after being arrested in 1979 and two of his brothers were arrested in 1982 and 1984 respectively, suffering torture before they were released and left Afghanistan. Other brothers had also left the country to avoid military service. He himself was active in the opposition party both as a student and when performing military service. He was arrested after the theft of a military jeep.

The following account was given to Amnesty International in the country in which he is now a refugee in August 1986.

"That night they arrested me. This was in June 1985. They came and searched the house and asked for my ID. I gave them the military ID. Then they took me. They took me to KHAD-e Shashdarak. There they asked me, 'Who in your family is in America?' I said, 'My brothers were taken from the street to the military, and I don't know where they are.' They asked me a lot of questions about my brothers. They said they knew my brothers were all in America. I denied it. They took my fingerprints. They knew each of my brothers specifically by name. Then they asked me 'Why did you steal the jeep?' I said, 'I didn't take a jeep.' They said, 'We have a witness.' and I said, 'No, I didn't take it.'

"Then they asked me a few questions and took me to a room made of cement which was very large and had a cot on one side, and they told me to spend the

night there. In the middle of the night two Soviets came, and they talked about me to the guards, but I didn't understand. They spoke to the Afghan KHAD people in Russian, pointing to me. Then they went out of the room without saying anything to me. I was on the bed, and the soldiers were outside the door.

"In the morning they gave me a good breakfast. I drank the tea, and then they took me to the same office where they had questioned me the night before. Again they asked me the same questions, 'Who ordered you to join the military? Who gave you a reference to join the military?' I told them, 'I was a volunteer. No one gave me a reference. I am in favour of the government. I like this government and want to work for it.' They asked me to tell the truth. They said they wouldn't tell anyone, but would release me if I said why I took the jeep and where. But I denied everything. Then they didn't say anything for another day.

"The next day they came for me, took me out and down to the entrance of Shashdarak where there was a jeep. The jeep had curtains and two soldiers in it. For about eight or ten minutes, no more, the car drove. Then it stopped at a very big garage. There were two soldiers by the door. The man from KHAD spoke to someone on a telephone by the door, and they took me inside. There were a lot of rooms, very small, very sparsely furnished. In each one there was a small mattress and a light cover. They put me in a room and said, 'Stay here.' For three days there were no questions. They gave me meals at mealtimes and took me to the bathroom whenever I had to go.

"About 2 am on the third night, two soldiers came. They told me to come with them. They took me through a long corridor. They took me into a room where there were three people--two on chairs sitting in front of me and one with me, one standing by me. For about 10 minutes they sat without speaking. Then one of them went out of the room, and in about five minutes came back with another man.

"The man he had with him had green eyes and was wearing the clothes of a Soviet officer [Kala-e Dagari], but there were no insignia on the shoulders. The other people stood up when he came into the room. The other people in the room were Afghans from the KHAD. The Soviet officer sat in the KHAD officer's seat, and the KHAD officer told me to come over. The KHAD man told me to sit in another chair, an armchair, and asked, 'Do you know what these things on the wall are?' I said, 'No, I don't know.' The KHAD officer said, 'If you don't speak, we will kill you tonight in this room and send your body out to your friends.' Then he asked me about the jeep, about my father again, and about my father's collaborators, people who associated with my father.

"I denied knowing anything about the jeep. I said, 'My father was killed in prison, and I served in the military, that's all.' When I denied it, the soldiers began to slap me. Then the soldiers kicked me with their boots. While they punched and kicked me, they asked me to speak. For the whole time that they were beating me, the man with the green eyes said nothing. Then after about an hour, he said something in Russian to the men who were hitting me. He went to the other side of the room and brought back something that looked like a small racket. It was a rod with something attached to it at the tip. He gave it to the KHAD people. They touched it to me twice, once on my hand and once to my side. I felt an electric shock, and I fell over.

"They said, 'You should speak. We will stay here in the room until the morning with these instruments.' They kept asking me who I was working with. They asked me, 'Keep on speaking, and tell us about your cousins as well.'

"They brought me back to the room the next night and they were sitting across the table from me. They asked questions. When I didn't answer, they threw the teapot at me and burned my stomach. I had a huge blister. Finally after several days, it hurt so much that they took me to see a nurse. The people who threw the teapot at me were soldiers, but the personnel had changed. However, the person who had my file was always there. For a long time afterwards the blister hurt very much. Whenever my shirt rubbed against the blister, I wanted to take it off, but they wouldn't let me. They took me to a room with a doctor and a bed, an infirmary, and treated my burns. I stayed there about 10 days. I rested in that room and then they took me back to the other room.

"For about 20 days they left me alone. After 20 days the person with the dossier took me to his office again. There were no torture instruments there, just a table with two people. He told me, 'You have only seen a little of what we can do. You should talk to us and stay on good terms. Tell us why you took the jeep, who you work with, and why you work with them. We will give you a gun and anything else you want.' He always spoke to me in a very nice way with good manners and asked questions. Then they took me back to my room. While I was in the room where I was being interviewed, I heard a lot of people crying and screaming - very loud screams. People pleading to be released.

"Then they took me back to the room with the instruments, and they told me 'You've seen everything in this room before, but it is not necessary for us to use it. Just tell us about everything.' But I denied it as always. Then they started punching and kicking me and my ear began to bleed very profusely. Then they took a long stick that had a kind of handle on the end and that bent, and they beat me with it on the knees and on the back around the kidneys. As they were in the process of hitting me, I started to make a lot of noise. I was screaming a lot. They kept asking me the names of people that I work with. About a half hour later someone entered the room. This person talked to the man who had the stick and the other man in Russian. After that they didn't ask me any more questions, and took me back to my room. In the room I was tortured in, I could see and hear people who were all bloodied and crying.

"For about a month they didn't ask me anything. They just fed me and kept me there. After about a month they took me back to the first office in Shashdarak. There was the same man with the file who said, 'Confess or you will be sent to Pul-e Charkhi.' It was just like before. I was always glad to see the man who had my file, because he spoke to me politely. When I was taken to go somewhere, I was always afraid they would take me to be tortured, so I was relieved to see that man with the file. Then they took me back to the room, and the next day I went to Pul-e Charkhi.

"For about a week they didn't ask me anything. There were many other people there with me. After about a week the guards had a letter and took me into an office. They took me back to Shashdarak. Here they asked me to sign a paper, but I didn't sign. I had nothing to say. Then someone came and took me to the door of KHAD-e Shashdarak. When they brought me back to the office, the man in charge of my file was there, and he asked me to sign a paper or else he

would send me back to Pul-e Charkhi for six or seven years. He said, 'Just tell us the truth.' At that moment I was really frightened, but again, I said nothing. Then the men took me out to the front of Shashdarak and told me to leave. I went home."

Information from Amnesty International

This briefing is part of Amnesty International's publications program. As part of its effort to mobilize world public opinion in defence of the victims of human rights violations, Amnesty International produces a monthly Newsletter, an annual report, and reports, briefings and other documents on countries in all quarters of the globe.

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AFGHANISTAN: TORTURE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

Political prisoners in Afghanistan face widespread and systematic torture. The testimonies of many former detainees and others show that torture is inflicted in detention centres run by the Afghan State Information Services throughout the country, and that Soviet personnel are often present during interrogation under torture.

There is a consistent pattern: detainees are routinely beaten during the early stages of interrogation; beatings often continue throughout the time in custody and may be accompanied by electric shock torture, sleep deprivation, exposure to extreme cold, near suffocation and other physical abuses. The victims include government officials, teachers, students and shopkeepers. Many are women.

Despite the difficulties of obtaining information, this report includes over a dozen detailed accounts of torture in Afghanistan. It spells out steps which should be taken by both Afghan and Soviet authorities to stop this abuse.